

3/12/08

Good morning/afternoon members of the Public Health Committee,
My name is Barbara Albert, registered CT voter, Hfd tenant, advocate/activist for human rights, and multiply medically challenged human being.

I support the idea of H.B. #5810 (raised) An act concerning the provision of Behavioral Health Services in emergency rooms. Just as with any issue, time will tell. Shortages and overcrowding, just being noticed?

Perhaps the "innovative methods" could be examples already proven to work, not proven to revictimize. Perhaps providers would be human beings, with actual life experience, 'been there, did more than just survive', who actually know what empathy and compassion ~~are~~. Perhaps safe, appropriate, innovative methods could stop being physical and chemical restraints. I dont know how many times this has happened to me, strapped down to a gurney, scared, angry, humiliated, several times intoxicated, several times legally dead, left in some corner, or pushed down some hallway, unattended, left with the very possibility of asperating on my own vomit.

Another example, I've been known to self-mutilated. The last time I went to the ER, voluntarily, due to it, I typed a sanitary napkin to my sprouting forearm, put a plastic bag over it, put my winter coat on, walked to the ER. Some intern, - maybe, med student, put I don't know how many subcutaneous sutures inside, then more on the outside skin, then I was physically restrained. Was not intoxicated, Was not suicidal intent, or ideation, or attention seeking. Much later - off to the hospital on a 15 day certificate, without my winter coat. It was November. I'm unfortunately, so not alone in experiences like these. I'm also not alone, with not having family to 'assist.' In my opinion, the outpatient place I'm a member of, does NOT have experience to deal with crises, staff openly admit they are not qualified, used to get told "speak with your provider." I don't ask anymore.

Contrary to personal opinion, I'm a sick human being, doing the best I can, with what is not available or accessible, doing the best I can to get healthy. Mental illness and addictions are illnesses. These illnesses are NOT contagious; I am not the illnesses I happen to have. I'm no more special, or less special than any human being.

Thank you for listening.